

# The Importance of Family

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Category: We Bare Bears

Genre: Family, Horror

Language: English

Characters: Grizz, Ice Bear, Panda

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2016-04-10 01:14:44

Updated: 2016-04-17 18:10:29

Packaged: 2016-04-27 19:53:55

Rating: T

Chapters: 3

Words: 11,959

Publisher: [www.fanfiction.net](http://www.fanfiction.net)

Summary: Ice bear has always dealt with things by himself. He has two older brothers, but Ice has never looked towards them for support or strength. Ice is strong. But, when something starts to melt Ice's barriers, the brothers are thrown into a wild chaotic mess. Ice will have to realize one thing: there is more than one pillar that holds up a family. Rated T to be safe.

## 1. Chapter 1

**\*\*Chapter One\*\***

\_Running, running, running\_

\_I have to get away\_

\_Can't stop, won't stop\_

\_Have to keep running\_

\_Laughter\_, \_Screams, Cries\_

\_Doesn't really matter what sounds are made\_

\_All it matters is that I run\_

\_Run, Run, Run\_

\_Run, \_\_\*\*Run...\*\*\_

**\*\*RUN!\*\***

\* \* \*

><p>Ice bear opened his eyes slowly, waking up from the strange dream. He got out of the fridge and looked up at the clock. It was

4:00 in the morning. Groaning irritably, Ice Bear forced himself to get up, his aching bones cracking a little as well. Not in the mood for sleep, he started walking around the cave, looking for anything he could do to pass the time. His brothers were surely asleep, it was, after all, very early. Ice bear always woke up early. Sighing, Ice bear walked out the door, knowing that he had to occupy his time somehow.<p>

Once he was outside, Ice bear looked up at the sky. He allowed a tiny smile to reach his face. The sky was littered with stars tonight. Even though the Bears lived near a large city, they still lived in a pretty secluded part of the woods, allowing them to see some very beautiful stars in the night sky, in all of their glory. The other bears didn't know this, since Ice was pretty good at hiding his emotions, but sometimes, when Ice bear was by himself, seeing all of those pretty stars twinkling in the sky... Sometimes he wished he could fly. Fly high enough to touch one of those stars. Feel the wind blowing against his fur.

" \_Freedom\_," Ice thought. Don't get the wrong idea. Ice, though he never said it out loud, loved his brothers very much and was really happy with his life. However, with every perk comes a price. Ice occasionally felt lonely, like he was missing something. He felt very empty inside. Then again, Ice had never actually looked towards his older brothers for support or strength, relying only on himself to carry his own problems. Maybe that's why he felt so empty, Ice sometimes thought. But, as fast as the idea came to his head, Ice immediately pushed it away.

Ice bear didn't want to burden his brothers with his own problems. Ice believed that, if he was strong, he could deal with it on his own, like always. No need to tell his brothers, they wouldn't understand Ice anyway. Ice bear felt the emptiness return once again as he continued to gaze up at the stars, perfectly content with the solitude. This has become a regular thing for Ice bear. The nightmares, along with this unusual stargazing routine. Not that Ice was particularly scared of his nightmares, it just... \_unsettled\_ him a little.

After a few more hours of stargazing, even dozing off for one of those hours, Ice got up and started to walk back to the cave. " \_Time to get the day started\_," he thought wearily. \*Snap\* Ice turned around, hearing a twig break. Ice stared into the woods cautiously. He could have sworn that he saw a flash of light blue, before it went away, and left the dark colors of the forest. He narrowed his eyes suspiciously, his sleepiness replaced by awareness. But as the seconds turned into minutes, Ice continued his way into the cave, still on the alert.

When Ice entered, he allowed himself to relax. " \_Probably just a squirrel or some large rodent,\_ " Ice reasoned with himself, but he still couldn't shake the uneasiness he felt in the pit of his stomach, and Ice bear was never wrong about these things. " \_Well, whatever it was, Ice bear will always protect his brothers. No one will ever hurt his family while Ice is around.\_ " What Ice didn't count on, was that his brothers weren't the ones that needed protecting this time.

As Ice continued his preparation for breakfast, he failed to notice a pair of glowing sapphire blue eyes staring at him through the

window.

\* \* \*

><p>The creature stayed completely quiet as it saw the polar bear slowly make his way into the cave. When it was sure the bear was inside, the creature got out of its hiding place and smirked. "*He's much more perspective than his older brothers*," the creature mused in its head. The creature was, since there was no better words to put it, an **\*\*it\*\***. It wasn't a girl or a boy, animal or human. It could be anything it ever wanted to be, and no one would ever notice it existed. That's what the creature wanted.

So why would a creature such as this one would have an interest in the Bears? The creature has asked itself the same question over and over again. It happened accidentally.

\_\_Flashback\_\_

The creature made another kill, a human boy, for food. Reports have gone out through San Francisco, all about missing children, adults, women, men, anyone you could think of. None of them were related. Yet, all were found in a similar fashion: torn up, stomachs ripped open, limbs spread apart from their bodies. "Another crazy serial killer" or "just some wild animal" was the excuse people said to calm their fears.

The creature made sure to be careful with this particular kill. It was a young boy of the age of 12. Black hair, hazel eyes, kind of pudgy, short, and he just happened to be the son of a very important celebrity. Just when the creature was about to dine, it heard voices coming from the east of him. "Hey Grizz? Are you sure you're not lost?" one voice asked. It had an insecure tone to it. The body that was attached to that voice must be an awkward individual. "Sure I know where we're going, lil bro! We're... umm, well?" this voice was older sounding. It was more gruff, loud, and obnoxious.

The creature felt itself turn its attention back to its feast, not caring about who or what the voices were. Then, the shuffling grew louder and louder. Knowing that it would get caught if it didn't act fast enough, the creature hid its kill and transformed into a bird. It decided to wait and see who were the bodies connected to the voices were. Who knows? If they looked delicious enough, maybe he could have an even larger feast.

Licking its lips, or in this case beak at the idea, the creature turned its attention back towards the ground. What appeared through the bushes were two bears, a panda and a grizzly. They appeared to be looking for someone, since they started calling "Brother" or "Little Bro". " \_So there's a third individual with them\_, " It thought, feeling a grin grow on its face. The creature looked around the perimeter, trying to spot what, the creature guessed, the third bear looked like. It frowned, not spotting the bear anywhere. Suddenly, it heard bushes shuffling around, and the simultaneous calls of "Brother" reached its ears. The creature snapped its head back down and saw a young polar bear.

The bear was both leaner and taller than the two other bears. " \_So, I guess he's the youngest\_, " the creature thought. There was something about this bear that the creature found... interesting. The

creature felt attracted to the polar bear, and for once in its life, it didn't feel all that hungry anymore. " Ice bear needed to find ax," a voice stated. The creature realized that it was the young polar bear talking. His voice was interesting to say the least. It was monotone, it was dull, but it was also smooth, calm, quiet... soothing almost. " \_So, the bear's name is Ice... just like his voice\_, " the creature mused in its head. Smirking slightly, the creature decided to let the Bears live... just because Ice's voice wasn't annoying like his two older brothers.

\_ -End of Flashback- \_

Since that day, the creature spied on the Bears frequently, or more precisely, it spied on Ice bear more frequently. The creature felt a growing obsession for the bear as the days rolled on. It learned that the bear was bilingual, and that he loved dancing, cooking, and martial arts. Oh, how that bear was full of surprises. The creature even watched Ice sleep one time. The creature had to be quiet when sneaking into the very large fridge. It was only once though. Since the polar bear slept in a fridge, he was kind of hard to spy so, that was the only time it saw Ice look so... vulnerable, cute. He actually looked like the youngest bear. And what made Ice look even more adorable, was that on that particular night, he was having another nightmare.

The creature thought Ice was absolutely adorable when he was having a nightmare. Ice's face would scrunch up cutely and he would start making whimpering sounds in his sleep. But then, the bear started thrashing violently, and his face scrunched up even more. The creature felt a pang of surprise when it saw the young bear looking so pained. Hesitantly, the creature allowed its spidery long hand to reach out and pet Ice bear's fur. It was soft and plush, unlike the stoic bear the creature came to know. It buried its hands deeper into his fur, lost in thought, while the bear stopped thrashing and fell into a deeper sleep.

The creature stayed like this for a while, even lifting the bear's head on to its lap to continue petting him. The creature, not liking the idea of being shorter than Ice for some reason, took the form of a really tall and thin woman (in order to fit inside of the fridge) in her late thirties. The creature felt a genuine smile reach its lips as it saw the bear smile happily in his sleep. It was a small smile, but it was a adorable nonetheless. Finally, opening the fridge door to let itself out, the creature saw the sun slowly starting to ascend into the air, queuing the creature that it was time to go.

Once outside and into the safety of the woods, the creature looked back and saw the bear get up and continue his day. Cleaning, cooking, and taking care of his brothers. Sometimes the creature couldn't believe that Ice was the youngest brother.

As the minutes turned into hours, the creature continued to spy on the bear, pondering why? Why was it so drawn to one bear? Why? An idea went through the creature's head. Ice was usually by himself, alone. It would be easy to \_eat \_him. The creature shook its head at the thought, it didn't feel hungry when it thought about Ice. He wanted Ice for... companionship, it guessed. Someone to talk to. Someone it could feel comfortable with.

Besides, Ice could fight, cook, and speak multiple languages. He could also be a valuable asset for its... Plans. But knowing Ice bear, he could be painfully stubborn. He needed some... persuasion. The creature chuckled a little as it continued walking through the woods.

The creature knew that Ice desired freedom, so... Why not simply "free" Ice bear from the nuisances he called " brothers." The creature started to scheme, planning on how to trap Ice bear. After all, these types of plans needed patience. It might take a few days to make everything perfect; flawless.

Yet, the creature couldn't wait to begin.

\* \* \*

><p><em>-Five days later-<em>

\*knock\* \*knock\* " Who's knocking?" Grizz pondered out loud. It was late at night, 8:00 to be exact, and it wasn't like the Bears got any visitors anyway, other than Chloe and Charlie. All the Bears were just done with their dinner, so the two other bears heard the knocking as well.

" Maybe it's Chloe, sometimes she visits late," Panda said, not taking his eyes off of his phone while Ice bear cleared their plates. " Yeah, but doesn't she usually call?" Grizz asked. Panda paused in his texting and looked up at Grizz. " ... Well, yeah, but who else would visit us. Charlie never knocks, he just breaks in through the windows," " Should we answer it?" " Grizz, what if it's someone dangerous?" " Ice bear says we should just leave it alone." After a few minutes of arguing, the bears were once again interrupted by more knocking, the knocking being more frantic this time.

" Okay, okay. I'll open the door. If it's someone bad... then Panda, karate chop them," Grizz said, " Wait, WHAT!?" Panda exclaimed. Before the two younger brothers could protest, Grizz already made his way towards the door and opened it slightly, just enough to see who was outside. It was a young man in his late 20's, about Grizz's age. He had blond hair with purple and red dye on his bangs. He was pretty tall for a person, being about 6'4. He was pretty normal looking, only wearing a brown hoodie, a pair of faded jeans, and green sneakers. However, the man looked worried, afraid even.

Grizz tentatively widened the already opened door to asked, " Umm, can I help you, sir?" " Yes, can I stay here for the night? I'm lost and it's about to rain." " Sir, your a stranger, and I don't know you. Besides, there's nothing to worry about, it's not gonna-" Just as Grizz was about to the man that it wasn't going to rain, it immediately started raining. Grizz looked up at the sky in confusion. " That's weird, the sky was clear a few moments ago," he thought. Grizz turned back to the man and sighed. The man started shivering in the rain, sniffing a little. Grizz, seeing such a miserable look on the man's face, gave him a small smile and said, " Come on in, sir. We have plenty of room in our cave!" The man smiled gratefully and said, " Thank you." Grizz smile widened as he led the man inside of the house. " No problem, man!"

\* \* \*

><p>" You're gonna love my little bro's cooking, I swear that he's probably the best in the world!" " I can't wait," the man replied with a small smile on his face. Panda nervously shifted in his seat, staring at the man in front of him. The man didn't really pay any attention to Panda, since he was mostly listening to Grizz chatter on and on about him, Ice, and Grizz himself.<p>

Panda had a bad feeling about this man and wondered if Ice and Grizz felt it too. The man, though he seemed pretty normal and calm, also seemed \_too \_normal. It was almost like the man was putting on a mask. Panda cleared his throat, and the man turned his attention on Panda. " Through all of the commotion, you never mentioned your name," Panda said, with a small polite smile.

" Oh, my name is Theodore Park, but you can call me Theo," Theo said, lifting up his hand to shake Panda's paw. " \_Firm grip\_," was what came into Panda's mind as Theo squeezed Panda's paw almost in a painful matter. Once Theo let go, Panda started rubbing his very sore paw. Now that they were inside, Panda noticed a few things about Theo. He was a pretty lengthy individual, but he wasn't a string bean. He had some muscle, note the strong grip, but he wasn't ripped. Theo looked like a normal human man.

" \_Well, the only thing that would be unusual about this man would be his eyes\_," Panda thought. It's true. The man had a very unusual pair of blue eyes. His eyes were a really dark blue, but they had really light hues of blue in the center of his eyes, making them pop out even more. " \_Like sapphires\_," Panda awed in his head. As Panda continued to silently stare at the man, he noticed that Theo sometimes shifted his gaze from Grizz to another location. Confused, Panda followed Theo's gaze and saw what he was staring at. Surprisingly, what Panda saw was just Ice cooking.

Ice was always creative when he was cooking something. Like usual, Ice held his stoic composure, but he seemed to almost glow in happiness when he was cooking, adding spices or different types of vegetables when needed. Panda felt a pang of worry when he saw Theo slightly staring at Ice, his older brother protective instincts flaring a little. Panda knew that Ice could take care of himself just fine, but still... there was just something wrong with this picture.

" \_Should I tell Grizz? I mean, this is a very important topic here. I really don't think this man... Theo should stay with us\_," Panda thought. He continued to ponder as Ice laid down some food for Theo. It was lobster bisque. As usual, the lobster was cooked to perfection, with creamy soup base around it. " Enjoy," Ice bear said quietly. " Thank you! You know, Grizz is absolutely right! You are a wonderful cook! This looks absolutely delicious!" Theo gushed out in a sickly sweet way. Ice bear nodded stiffly as he sat down next to panda. He started to slowly scoot towards his older brother... and as far away from Theo as possible.

Theo got up, with his plate, to get some napkins and a glass of pulp free OJ... just to then sit down in a vacant seat next to Ice bear. Ice sulked a little bit in his seat, but was polite nonetheless. " \_Did Ice notice Theo's staring as well? \_Well, Ice is more perspective than me, so I guess that makes sense,\_," Panda thought. " So Theo, how did you get lost in the first place," Grizz asked, breaking the awkward silence.

" I was looking for a national park that was close to this forest, but then I got to a certain part to the woods that I didn't recognize. I started walking back, but then I got more lost. It was getting late, so I started looking for shelter. Then, I stumbled across your cave," Theo said. " Well, why didn't you use a phone or a GPS? If you're going hiking or walking in an unknown area, you should have one," Panda stated. " I did have a phone, but I must have lost it while I was walking."

" Well, what's important is that you now have a place to stay. What about this, we can help you find your phone tomorrow," Grizz said suggestively. " Grizz-" " You would really help me?" Theo asked, smiling widely. Grizz ignored both of his brothers and answered, " Sure, why not?" Panda, along with Ice bear, sulked deeper into their seats as Theo thanked Grizz and made sure to repeatedly compliment Ice bear, saying that he made delicious food. " \_This'll be a long night\_, " Panda and Ice simultaneously thought sadly.

\* \* \*

><p>" Grizz, I need to talk to you, it's important." After dinner, Panda decided to talk to Grizz <em>privately<em>. Ice bear needed to wash the dishes and Theo (unfortunately) volunteered to help, in order to pay for the meal. "What's wrong, Pan-Pan?" Grizz asked while playing his video game. Panda waited for him to finish the level, wanting Grizz's full attention. Once Grizz paused the game, he turned towards panda, waiting for him to continue.

Panda sat down and started the must needed discussion. " I'm going to cut to the point, I don't like Theo." " What? Why not?" " He not only creeps me out, but he creeps our little brother out as well." Grizz just shook his head, " You two are just being paranoid. The guy seems fine in my books." Before he could start his game again, Panda interrupted him once more. " He keeps stealing glances with our brother and if that's not creepy in 'your books', then you need to update it." Grizz's facial expression suddenly turned from confusion to surprise shock. " What? He kept-" " Yes, and I'm worried Grizz! I'm worried for our brother!"

Grizz pondered for a moment, then replied, " What if it was just harmless staring? I mean, you've got to admit, Bro is an awesome cook, maybe Theo was just amazed?" " I don't know Grizz, I just have a bad feeling about this guy. It seems like he's trying hard to get very buddy-buddy with our little brother. " " Okay, if you really feel that uncomfortable being around Theo, we can just try to cut ties with him \_after\_ we help him find his phone. He is leaving tomorrow anyway." " What if he continues to talk to or visit us?" " We'll only help him if he needs us and that's it. No friendship, just acquaintances."

Panda groaned angrily. He honestly didn't like that answer, and Grizz knew it. " Look, we can't really do anything if he hasn't done anything bad to us. It will just be plain rude if we keep rejecting him for no reason." " Yeah, your right." " If there's anything you need, you know where I am," Grizz said. Before Panda could say anything, Grizz returned to his game. Panda sighed dejectedly before he turned around and headed towards his room. If this guy really was bad, Panda assumed that he wouldn't try anything while all of them were in the same house, even if he was with Ice.

\* \* \*

><p>" <em>Is Panda right? Now that he mentioned it, the man was staring at Ice, only for a few seconds. He even moved his seat so he could sit next to him. But, that's no reason to be so jumpy.<em>" While Grizz played his game, he continued to think about Panda's words. As the eldest brother, it was only natural for him to worry for both of his brothers. He never actually had to worry about his youngest brother, since he never really needed any protection.

Ice wasn't sensitive like Panda, nor did he crave for attention like Grizz. In fact, Grizz often wondered if Ice preferred to be alone. Grizz, even though he didn't see anything wrong with Theo, trusted both of his brothers. They would have to be cautious around Theo for now on. Hopefully everything would turn out okay in the end. Hopefully.

\* \* \*

><p>" Do you enjoy doing chores for your brothers? I mean, I get that you're good at cooking and cleaning, but I think your brothers should appreciate you more," Theo said. Since Theo wanted to help Ice bear wash the dishes, Ice gave him the job of drying while Ice cleaned the dishes. " Ice bear likes cooking for his family. He also likes cleaning," Ice said gruffly as he continued washing the dishes.<p>

" Not really a talkative bear, are you?" Theo asked, amusement lacing his voice. Ice bear narrowed his eyes slightly at Theo's tone, but didn't reply. " Well, that's okay. I like silence as well." " \_Then why are you still talking\_, " Ice thought irritably. They continued washing the dishes in uncomfortable silence. Well, uncomfortable for Ice at least, since he kept feeling Theo's eyes burning into his side. " Why are you staring at Ice bear?" Ice asked. "I've never seen a polar bear up close before." " Ice bear assumes that you \_have\_ seen Grizzlies and Pandas up close before."

Theo simply laughed a little. " No, it's not like that. I just think you're an interesting individual, that's all. If you don't like my staring, I could stop." " Ice bear would appreciate that." Theo simply smirked and shrugged his shoulders, irritating Ice even more. Finally, they were done with the dishes. Ice sighed in relief. He looked at the time and saw that it was already 11:00 pm.

Ice was about to enter the fridge when Theo (oh my god) interrupted him once again. " Why do you sleep in a fridge?" " Ice bear wonders why you ask so many questions." " Last time I checked, not a lot of people sleep in a fridge."

Before Ice could retort, thankfully, Grizz entered the kitchen. " Hey man. The bed's made up and everything. I can lead you to the room." Theo's smug smirk melted into a sweet smile so quickly, that Ice almost felt scared that a human could change moods that fast. " Thanks again Grizz for letting me stay." " No problem man, now come on." Grizz turned towards Ice. "Night bro." Then he left.

Theo turned towards Ice bear, his smirk back on his face. " Goodnight, Ice Bear." As Theo turned and left the room, he made one final comment. "Hope you don't have any nightmares!" When Ice was sure Theo was gone, Ice turned towards the table and sat down,



sulking deeply into the chair and rubbing his temples tiredly.

For once in his life, Ice felt a twinge of fear. This guy, Theo... why was he staring at him? Why was he so... so creepy? Ice bear sighed and got up from his seat. He went inside the fridge and closed the door. " \_Hope you don't have any nightmares!\_" The way Theo said it was almost in a mocking tone. He said it in such a sickly sweet way that made Ice bear want to vomit. But, the thing that unsettled Ice the most was Theo's eyes.

" \_I could have sworn that I saw a familiar shade of blue when I went outside at night a couple days ago\_, " Ice thought. Ice, however, didn't evaluate on this matter anymore, for he slowly drifted into a dreamless sleep.

## 2. Chapter 2

**\*\* -Chapter Two- \*\***

\_ " Now, are you sure you can carry both of us, " Grizz asked. Ice simply gave a strained grunt as he continued walking. Ice was a strong bear. He could carry heavier things for miles without getting tired. However, carrying two grown bears on your back is another thing. Ice continued to walk through the forest, trying to ignore the two large weights on his back. Sadly, it wasn't working as well as he hoped.\_

\_Grizz, being the protective eldest brother that he was, invented the bear stack so the bears could travel together in a group. So this way, it was impossible for the bears to get \_\_separated. However, since the bears were stacked, one bear had to carry two of the bears around and do all of the walking. Grizz wanted to be the bottom bear, but Panda suggested that they transition when the bottom bear got tired, so it would be fair for everyone.\_

\_This would have been a good plan... if it wasn't for the fact that both Grizz and Panda got tired really easily. That left Ice to be the bottom bear. Both Panda and Grizz objected immediately, but Ice insisted. So, here they were now, taking a small stroll through the woods with Grizz on top, Panda in the middle, and Ice at the bottom. Ice took another deep breath and paused in his walking.\_

\_Grizz noticed this and jumped off Panda's back. " We can stop here for now, " he said. Panda nodded and hopped down Ice's back. Ice gave a small sigh in relief and allowed himself to fall down into the soft grass. He rolled onto his back and looked up at the sky. It was a beautiful summer day in San Francisco. A light spring breeze blew through the flowers next to Ice bear. The sky was a nice light blue and it was filled with a few wispy clouds as well. Ice allowed a ghost of a smile to graze his face as he closed his eyes.\_

\_ " Hey, that kind of looks like a heart, " a voice stated. Ice opened his eyes and turned his head. Grizz was laying on the right of Ice, while Panda laid on his left. Ice turned his attention back to the sky. The cloud indeed looked like a heart. " Now it looks like a rabbit, " Panda said. As Panda and Grizz continued to call out different cloud shapes, Ice suddenly felt extremely tired. Ice tried to keep his eyes open, but for some reason, he couldn't.\_

" Too tired... fight... eyes open.. so sleepy," was all Ice thought before his world faded back into darkness.\_

\* \* \*

><p><em>When Ice reopened his eyes again, he was surprised to find himself in a dark cave. It was nothing like the cave he called home. It was a huge cave, completely barren. Ice gulped as he started walking deeper and deeper into the intimidating cave. \*drip\* \*drip\* \*drip\* went the water. The sound echoed through the large cave, making the air rise with <em>\_tension.\_

\_Ice felt lost and confused. But most of all... Ice was scared. Where were his older brothers? Are they okay? What happened? Ice continued to look frantically around the cave, trying to find something, **\*\*anything\*\*** that would lead him to his brothers. His search, sadly, ended in vain. Ice bear contemplated on just sitting on the ground, waiting for someone to save him. At least that idea would save his strength.\_

" No, that would do nothing. I can't just sit around all day. What if my brothers need saving? What if they're in trouble? I have to help them." With a new idea in motion, Ice continued walking.\_

\_It might have been hours, Ice lost track of time, but he finally found something. It wasn't a sight that Ice wanted to see. Blood. Blood was all over the cave walls. It was like someone painted the cave with the sticky substance. At first, Ice bear prayed that it was just red paint. His prayers weren't answered, for the unmistakable scent of blood filled Ice's nostrils quickly.\_

\_Ice felt disgust rise in the pits of his stomach. The feeling to vomit was almost unbearable. Not wanting to make an even bigger mess of the cave and to save his dignity, Ice bear covered his nose. This didn't stop the scent of blood from breaching Ice's nose, but the smell was a little bit bearable now. Ice continued to \_\_trudge through the cave. Ice wanted to leave, but he knew that his brothers might be in this cave. Even if Ice reaches the end of this cave and finds something horrible, Ice needed to make sure that his brothers weren't here. He had to make sure.\_

\_Finally, Ice reached the end of the cave. Ice gave a sigh of relief, thankful that he didn't find his brothers in a bloody mess. Even though Ice still needed to look for his brothers, it was better for his brothers to be lost than dead. " W-what a-are y-y-you d-d-doing h-here?" a small, timid voice asked behind Ice bear. Ice turned around to face that person, only to find a young girl standing a few feet behind him.\_

\_The girl was covered in bruises, scratches, and scars. She had deep dark bags under her eyes, due to lack of sleep. She was so gaunt and frail to the point that Ice feared that a small breeze would make this girl fall apart. She had long brown hair that reached the floor, but it was very thin and she didn't have a lot of hair anyway. What would have been bright beautiful emerald greens were now dulled \_\_fearful green eyes. This girl was the very picture of sickness and misery. This girl was just a mere shell of a person. When Ice looked into her eyes, all he saw was fear and \_\_despair.\_

" And she's no older than Chloe," Ice thought sadly. The girl once

again looked \_\_desperately at Ice. " Y-you can't b-b-be here. Y-you need to l-l-eave, now," she said urgently. Suddenly, a voice echoed the halls.\_

\_Where are you, my prey\_

\_Come out, come out\_

\*\*\_Wherever you are\_\*\*

\_The voice itself was scary and sinister enough, but it was everywhere. Like the blood that dripped from the cave walls and \_\_ceiling, the voice continued its mockery, repeating the words over and over and over again like a broken radio. Ice, by now, was beyond terrified. He didn't know where to go. Should he run forward? Should he stay behind and protect this girl? Should he curl into a small ball and beg for mercy? What should he do?\_

\_" R-run," the girl whispered. Ice was about to protest, but the girl weakly pushed him forward, rendering Ice bear speechless. " R-run, d-d-on't worry about m-me. I-it won't h-harm m-m-me, y-yet," the girl repeated, this time, her voice getting a little louder. So, that's exactly what Ice did. He ran.\_

\_Running, running, running\_

\_" Where do I go?" Ice thought frantically, avoiding a bunch of rocks along his path to avoid tripping. " Where are my brothers? Did they... Did they leave me?! They wouldn't do \_\_that!"\_

\_I have to get away\_

\_Can't stop, won't stop\_

\_Have to keep running\_

\_" Panda, Grizz, where are you?! I need you! Oh god, I'm so scared, so very scared," Ice sobbed in his head as he continued running. His breathing was now labored as he continued to run from his invisible enemy.\_

\_Laughter\_, \_Screams, Cries\_

\_Doesn't really matter what sounds are made\_

\_All it matters is that I run\_

\_While Ice was preoccupied by his terrified thoughts, he failed to notice a large rock in front of him. He tripped and tumbled forward. Ice landed on his leg, effectively twisting it.\_

\_Run, Run, Run\_

\_Ice turned around frantically just to see a large blurred figure running towards him at lightning speed.\_

\_Run, \_\_\*\*Run...\*\*\_

\_Before Ice could cover his eyes in fear, he caught a \_\_glimpse of a crazed fanged smirk along with \_\_mischievous sapphire blue

eyes.\_

**\*\*RUN!\*\***

\_And all Ice could do was scream.\_

\* \* \*

><p>Unlike last time whereas Ice simply opened his eyes calmly to exit his nightmare, Ice snapped open his eyes in a desperate attempt to wake up. He started breathing frantically, trying to reclaim his breath once again. Ice placed his paw on his chest in an attempt to calm his frantically beating heart. He was sure that it was beating so loud that his brothers could surely hear it.<p>

As the minutes rolled on, his heart beat went back down to a steady rate and Ice bear was able to control his breathing once again. Shakily, Ice exited the fridge and walked towards the kitchen sink to get a nice cool glass of water. With trembling paws, he opened the cabinet to get a small glass. He turned the faucet on and held the glass underneath it. Water pooled into the glass.

Once Ice got his water, he turned towards the table and slowly sat down. Taking a small sip, Ice turned his head towards the clock. This time, it was just 6:00 in the morning. "\_Better than last time\_", Ice thought bitterly as he took another sip of water. Ice sat back against his chair and took another deep breath. The nightmare was worse than last night.

Though Ice tried not to feel this way, Ice couldn't help but feel betrayed by his brothers. He knew that it was only a nightmare, and that Panda and Grizz would never abandon him in a place like that, but... still... Where were they when Ice needed them the most? Ice wanted to go to his brothers and talk to them about his nightmares. It was a very reasonable thing to do. After all, it was probably best that Ice didn't keep all of the pent up stress inside of him.

However, the more Ice tried to reason with himself that it was a good idea to tell his brothers, the more his pride seemed to convince him otherwise. " \_Just like a small toddler crying to their mommy\_." Ice groaned irritably and gently banged his head against the table. How could this day get any worse? " \_Oh yeah, today we're helping Theo find his phone\_", he thought sadly.

If you haven't guessed it yet, Ice bear **\*\*loathed\*\*** Theo. He absolutely hated him. Talk about bad first impressions. Some people would scold Ice for his childish behavior. Some people would say, " You just met the guy. Give him a chance! Maybe you two could be great friends!" But Ice knew better than to trust a human like Theo. Theo was the type of person that Ice could never get along with. Though Ice didn't really like Charlie either, it was a different scenario.

Charlie was sloppy, disorganized, and overall overbearing. However, Ice could still tolerate Charlie and saw him as a good friend. At least Charlie was a good hearted individual that was honest, hardworking, and compassionate. Even Ice had to admit that much.

However, Theo wasn't anything like that. Ice didn't care if Theo was the neatest, smartest, or most powerful being in the world. That would never change who Theo is. Theo was a \_snake\_, and Ice bear hated snakes. Like a snake shedding its skin, Theo seemed to change personalities, to change who he was, in order to get what he wanted. That kind of person always scared Ice bear.

Why?

If a person kept changing their identity, kept changing themselves to fit in, kept hiding their true nature to slither their way into someone's heart, then what was that person like before the lying began? That person wouldn't exist anymore. It scared Ice bear that people were willing to let go of themselves in order to just simply fit in or get what they want. Was it worth it? Ice just couldn't understand.

Even though Ice didn't know Theo that well, he still trusted his gut. " \_Stay away from Theo. Ignore him, push him away, do anything you can, but don't let him get close to you\_, " it screamed. " \_Never trust a snake\_, " Ice thought. Ice looked at his now empty glass. Getting up, Ice once again made his way towards the faucet. " Hey, couldn't sleep either huh?" a voice asked.

" \_Speak of the devil and he shall appear\_, " Ice thought. Turning his attention towards the human leaning casually against the door frame, Ice took his seat, staring at the man cautiously. Theo walked towards Ice and sat down next to him. Ice looked into his eyes and looked away immediately. Theo's eyes were blue. Like in his nightmare. " Wow, you really don't like me, do you?" Theo asked with a small smirk.

" Ice bear doesn't like you... at all." " You're a blunt individual." " Ice bear doesn't see a problem with that." " You could hurt my feelings." " Ice bear doubts that." Theo chuckled a little and sighed. " Well, this has been officially the longest conversation I've had with you." Ice glared at Theo coldly before turning his gaze back to his water. Theo smiled and said, " No need to be so cold, kid." "You're not that much older than Ice bear." " Let's see, I'm 29, how old are you?" "... 20," Ice said in defeat.

" I see. How old are your brothers?" " Why do you wish to know?" " Just curious." "... Panda is 24 while Grizz is 27." " You really are the baby of the family!" Theo gushed out. Ice bear held back an eye roll as he got up and headed towards the fridge. " Hey, where are you going?" Theo asked. " Ice bear will go back to sleep now." "By the way, why were you up, Icy?"

Ice bear cringed at the horrible nickname and turned, once again, towards Theo. He walked around the table so he could face Ice bear directly. Since Ice was a bear and Theo was a person, Ice still had to look down in order to maintain eye contact with Theo. But Theo was a pretty tall person, so Ice didn't have to look that far down in order to stare at him. " Ice bear doesn't feel like he should tell you." " It was a nightmare, wasn't it?" Ice bear simply ignored him and was about to enter the fridge. Then, a large spidery long hand wrapped around his arm and stopped him from going any further.

Ice froze when he felt the hand. It was so, so cold. Even though Ice slept in a fridge, Ice was still a warm bear. The fridge provided Ice

bear with a comfortable cool that helped him sleep. This cold, however, almost burned his arm. Startled, Ice bear tried to jerk his arm away from the burning cold hand, but it held firm. Theo simply stood there as he continued to hold Ice bear's arm in a forceful matter.

" If you're scared, you can just talk to me about it, alright?" Theo asked with a large smile. His voice was friendly, but it was a mocking friendly. It was a threatening friendly. Before Ice could protest, Ice felt the hand squeeze tighter around his arm painfully. Wincing a little, Ice turned his attention back to Theo, trying his hardest not to punch that arrogant snout in the face.

" \_I can't make a \_\_commotion, it'll wake my brothers." \_Hesitantly, Ice nodded his head. Theo, seemingly pleased with this answer, released Ice's arm. Ice pulled his arm away from the freezing cold hand. Theo backed away, his smirk still on his face. " Goodnight, Icy-" " Please don't call Ice bear that." Theo merely shrugged his shoulders and left. Taking a shaky breath, Ice bear turned towards his fridge, planning on falling asleep. Sadly, not all plans go your way, for Ice bear stayed awake for the remainder of the night, rubbing his arm in a desperate attempt to warm it up and forget about that terrible feeling of Theo's cold hand.

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><p>Unknown to both Ice bear and (luckily) Theo, Panda and Grizz saw the whole thing. Panda, feeling hungry, wanted to sneak into the kitchen, quietly opened the fridge (careful not to wake Ice bear), get a pudding pop, then get back into his room. Before he could make it into the kitchen, he saw Ice sitting down drinking some water... with Theo sitting right next to him.<p>

Panda usually didn't like eavesdropping, but he felt like this time, it was totally justified. " Wow, you really don't like me, don't you?" " Ice bear doesn't like you... at all." Panda stifled a snicker, hearing how blunt his little brother was. " Hey Panda, what's going on. I heard talking, so I got up and-" " Shh, Grizz, I'm trying to listen." Grizz, now curious, listened in on the conversation.

" No need to be so cold, kid." " You're not that much older than Ice bear." " Let's see, I'm 29, how old are you?" " Jeez, he's old," Grizz said out loud. Panda merely nodded his head in agreement. In all honesty, they didn't think that Theo was that old. He looked younger than that. " How old are your brothers?" " Why do you wish to know?" Just curious." "... Panda is 24 while Grizz is 27." "You really are the baby of the family!" Both Panda and Grizz winced at Theo's tone. It was so, so... sweet. And not the good kind of sweet either.

Both Grizz and Panda saw Ice get up with Theo in pursuit. " Hey, where are you going?" " Ice bear will go back to sleep now." " By the way, why were you up, Icy." Both brothers listened closely. They were concerned. They wanted to know why Ice was up as well. They saw Ice cringe as he turned around to face Theo. " Ice bear doesn't feel like he should tell you." " It was a nightmare, wasn't it?" The brothers felt their stomachs drop at what Theo said. Did their brother have nightmares? Was their brother... suffering because of these nightmares? Was their brother scared?

" Grizz, if he's scared of something, he would tell us... Would he?" " I don't know Pan-Pan, little bro always did handle things by himself." They turned back towards the two, but what they saw made Panda and Grizz freeze with both surprise and anger. Ice's arm was being held by Theo. They saw the uncomfortable look on Ice's face and the tugging of his arm, but Theo refused to let go, even squeezing the arm even tighter. What made the two older brothers so angry was the fright in Ice's eyes. They saw how scared and uncomfortable Ice felt. And that made their blood boil.

Before Grizz could storm into the kitchen and give Theo a piece of his mind, Panda hesitantly held him back. " If you're scared, you can talk to me about it, alright?" Theo said with a sickly sweet smile. They saw Ice shakily nodded his head, then Theo let go. They saw Ice pull his arm back towards himself, rubbing it a little. " Goodnight, Icy-" " Don't call Ice bear that," Ice bear said quietly. Theo shrugged and walked away. Luckily for the two bears that were hiding, Theo exited the hall that was in the opposite direction from Panda's and Grizz's hall. Finally, Ice entered his fridge, still shaking from what happened.

Grizz turned towards Panda and asked," Why did you stop me? That jerk shouldn't be picking on him." " Grizz, I think it would be best if we waited for tomorrow to confront him about it. Then, we can talk to our little brother about the nightmares, if he is, as Theo says, having nightmares that are bothering him." Grizz sighed and nodded his head. " Sorry for not believing you in the first place about Theo. Man, that guy's a freak." " It's okay Grizz, it's fine now." Both brothers shared a smile as they walked towards the fridge. They thought about opening the fridge door to talk to their brother, but they thought it would be better if they waited for morning.

And with that, both brothers took a seat at the table and waited for Ice to get out of the fridge. They weren't really tired anyway.

### 3. Chapter 3

**\*\*Chapter Three\*\***

When Ice bear got out of his fridge, he was surprised to see Panda and Grizz asleep at the breakfast table. Ice couldn't help but smile at the sight of his two older brothers sleeping. Sighing slightly, Ice went towards the closet to get his apron. Once he tied the ribbon, securing it on him, Ice walked towards the fridge to get a few ingredients for breakfast.

As Ice prepared the food, he couldn't help but rub his arm gently as he cut Grizz's bacon into little pieces. Theo's cold hand, the one that grabbed Ice's arm, still settled in Ice's brain, haunting him. " \_No human hand could be that cold\_, " Ice bear thought. Ice unconsciously continued to rub his arm. He wanted to forget that feeling of that uncomfortable cold hand. He didn't want to see Theo anymore. He wanted the nightmares to stop.

Ice knew that he couldn't just wish for something, and then hope that it'll come true. He had to do something about Theo. Somehow, he'll get through this. Feeling somewhat less miserable, Ice turned his attention back to breakfast. Since Ice didn't feel all that hungry,

he decided to only make food for Grizz, Panda, and Theo. For Grizz, Ice was thinking about making him a bacon and cheese stuffed potato with Chocolate Coconut Scones on the side and pulp free OJ for his drink.

For Panda, he thought it would be nice to make him a simple Sunday Vegetarian Strata with Vegan Lemon Poppy Scones on the side. Luckily, not only were these foods vegetarian, but they were nut free as well. For a drink, Ice wanted to make him something of his own creation: a Purple Monstrosity Fruit Smoothie. Since they had a lot of OJ, and the smoothie needed **\*\*\_a lot\_\*\*** of it, Ice thought it would be a good idea.

Finally, for Theo... Ice sighed and tried to think of a good meal for Theo. He couldn't make his food taste bad... sadly, but Ice didn't want to put too much effort into it. So, after a few more minutes of thinking, Ice decided to make Theo one of his simplest dishes, it was called Slow Cooker Apple Cinnamon Oats (yeah, long name) with a side of Bublik (a poppy seed bagel) on the side. Deciding that this was a good meal for both his brothers and for Theo, Ice bear started cooking.

Ice bear loved to cook. It was his passion. He began humming to himself as he began baking the potato, slicing the cheese, throwing some seasoning- " Hey, what song are you humming, Icy?" And it's over. Ice bear froze a little at hearing Theo's voice and that ridiculous nickname. Sighing, Ice turned around to face Theo. Theo was lounging in his chair, staring at Panda and Grizz's sleeping forms.

" Well, they had a rough night," Theo said, poking Grizz's head harshly. Ice growled lowly but said nothing else. Knowing that Theo wouldn't do anything, Ice turned back to his cooking, wanting ignore the creepy man behind him. " You know, it's rude to ignore people, and it's even more rude to not answer their questions. What song were you humming, \_Ice bear?" \_Theo's tone turned from feigned warmth to icy cold in a second.

Ice turned his head to glare at Theo. Nobody spoke his name, especially not people that Ice bear didn't like. Theo matched Ice's glare easily. " \_Is this guy bipolar or something... Maybe he's just crazy\_, " Ice thought. Ice really just wanted to make Theo disappeared. This sounded silly and childish, but Ice wished that he could just clap his paws together and make Theo vanish into thin air.

" \_I've only knew this guy for barely a day and I feel like he's already ruining my life\_. " Not wanting to cause a fight, or a giant stain on the floor of beaten Theo that Ice would eventually have to clean up, Ice answered Theo's question. " Ice bear was humming an ancient Japanese lullaby. It's one of Ice bear's favorites. Ice bear knew that song ever since he was little." " What's it called?" " The Red Birds." " Oh, I've heard of that song before. It's a beautiful song." Ice merely nodded his head in agreement and turned his attention back to his cooking.

He heard footsteps approach him. Theo slowly took one of Ice's cooking utensils from his paw and turned towards his unfinished food. Ice bear stared at Theo, confusion marring his features. " You seem tired, I can take over from here." Ice felt shocked at Theo's



request, but then that shock slowly turned into indignation. Before Ice could snatch his spatula back, Theo looked up at him, his sapphire blue eyes glinting dangerously.

At first glance, you'd think that Ice bear's eye color was black, but you'd be wrong. Ice bear had a unique eye color. While both Ice's brothers had dark brown eyes, Ice had a pair of silver grey eyes. " \_Like a storm\_, " Theo pondered in his head as he stared into Ice's eyes. " \_Like my nightmare\_, " \_Ice thought as he stared into Theo's eyes. Suddenly, Ice felt a huge pang of pain hit his head. Ice groaned in pain and dropped his remaining utensil to rub his head, trying to get rid of the pounding headache. Slowly, Ice felt himself get so tired. He felt his eyesight swim and his vision blur. Ice felt so lightheaded.

Ice heard Theo say something, but it was really muffled. Feeling an arm snake around Ice's shoulders, Ice unconsciously leaned back into whoever was holding him. The person allowed him to do so and started directing him towards the fridge. Slowly entering it, Ice relaxed and looked up at the blurry shape of the person who helped him. Before Ice fainted due to utter exhaustion, he saw the person smile a little, before closing the fridge, surrounding Ice in darkness. As well as darkening Ice's world.

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><p>" <em>What's that smell?<em>" Grizz thought. Forcing his eyes to open, he saw that he was sitting at the table. Grizz turned his head towards Panda, tapping him awake. " Hey, Pandy, wake up." " Uhh, my head." Panda opened his eyes slowly, trying to blink away his sleepiness. Then, he started to sniff the air. " Hey, is little bro cooking?" " Nope, just good ole Theo." Both bears jumped at the voice. Due to fatigue, they didn't notice Theo standing in front of them. Instead of their brother cooking in front of them, it was Theo.

Grizz stood up in alarm and shock. Where was their brother? " Where's our little brother," Panda demanded angrily. Theo merely gestured towards the fridge, not taking his eyes off of the food he was making. Grizz walked up to the fridge and opened it slowly. Thankfully, Ice bear was sleeping peacefully, a blanket wrapped around his body snugly. " Icy was too tired to cook, so I directed him back into the fridge. I took over the cooking," Theo said.

Panda walked over to the fridge and sighed in relief. He brushed Ice's head a little and fixed the blanket so it would be more comfortable for him. Closing the door, Panda and Grizz turned towards Theo. Theo had a small smile on his face. This time, Panda noticed that his smile seemed almost genuine. Happy. Turning towards the table, Theo gently placed the plates of food on it and sat down. Hesitantly, the two brothers did the same.

" You know, your brother looks adorable when he's sleeping," Theo commented, breaking the silence. Grizz and Panda stopped eating and turned their attention towards the man sitting in front of them. Though Theo went it as a compliment, he had a creepy edge in his voice that made the two older brothers' warning bells go off. Not wanting to be rude, Grizz replied, " Umm, thank you. Uh, the food tastes great by the way. What kind of seasoning did you put?" " Oh, just some Italian spices. I made sure not to put any nuts in Panda's

food."

" Umm, not to sound ungrateful or anything, but why are you cooking? Usually he's up by now," Panda asked. Theo merely shrugged and turned back towards his food. Feeling tension rise once again, Grizz cleared his throat awkwardly. " Hey, when you're done eating, we can go and look for your phone-" " Great idea! After we're done, I can wash the dishes. Once Icy wakes up, we can go and search for my phone."

Silence... Until Panda spoke up. " We were actually hoping to let him sleep and we will help you to find your phone." Theo's blue eyes shone in irritation, but then he quickly covered it up. " I thought it would be a good idea to wait for Icy. My phone could be anywhere in the woods. With his help, it might help me get out of your hair faster." Panda turned towards Grizz slowly, silently asking him to not agree to Theo's terms. Grizz nodded towards Panda and turned to look at Theo. Grizz was planning on telling Theo no. Ice needed rest and they didn't need his help. " \_Once we're done with finding Theo's phone, I think Panda and I should have a little talk with Ice bear about his nightmares\_, " Grizz thought.

Sadly, Grizz never got the chance to reject Theo's idea, since he was interrupted by the sound of the fridge door opening. " Oh, hey little bro! Glad your awake," Panda said, forcing a smile on his face. Ice stood in front of the fridge, rubbing his eyes tiredly before opening them. Ice's tired face turned into one of surprise after seeing three dirty plates on the table. " Since you were asleep, I decided to make the food for you. Think of it as a thank you gift for your gracious hospitality," Theo said sweetly. Ice still looked confused. " Hey, if you're still tired, you can go back to sleep," Grizz suggested. Ice merely shook his head and headed towards one of the plates.

" It's okay bro! I got it," Grizz exclaimed while snatching the plate from Ice's paw. " I can help too," Panda said, taking the remaining plates and walking towards the sink. Ice stared at them for a while before plopping down on a seat across from Theo. It didn't take long to wash the dishes, since there were only three dishes and three cups to wash anyway. After the two bears were done, they walked towards the table once again. " Well, come on! We have to find your phone don't we," Grizz said. " Yeah, you need to get home," Panda agreed.

Theo smiled back at the two and stood up. Ice was about to stand as well before he was stopped by Grizz. " Hey bro, I don't think you should come, I mean, you still look tired. Maybe you should stay here." Frowning a little, Ice shook his head stubbornly. " Ice bear is in perfect condition." " Yeah, but-" " Ice bear is fine." " But you were-" " Ice bear is fine." " But-" " Ice bear is going. And there's nothing you can do to stop Ice bear." Sighing in defeat, Grizz nodded his head solemnly before walking out the door with Panda in pursuit. Raising a brow at the two, Ice followed as well, along with Theo. " \_I need to go with them, to protect them from Theo\_, " Ice thought as he walked out the door. " \_We need to protect Ice from Theo\_, " Panda and Grizz thought as they continued to walk out of the forest.

Each brother wanted to protect each other from the human named Theo. Each would do anything for each other. Maybe, just maybe, if they knew how powerful the "human" was, they would have doubled their

defenses, they would have guarded themselves more.

Grizz made the mistake of letting Theo stay at their place for dinner, he made the mistake of letting Theo sleep in their cave, he made the mistake of offering Theo their assistance to find his phone, but his most recent mistake will cause both Grizz and Panda to lose the thing they cherish the most. Things will never be the same, just because the Bears underestimated their guest. " \_Grizz shouldn't have let Panda eat the food I made\_, " was what Theo thought as he walked out of the cave and stared at his prey. " This'll be easier than I thought, " Theo said out loud, smirking almost sinisterly while staring at Ice bear.

" Did you say something, Theo?" Panda asked suspiciously. Allowing himself to grin at Panda, Theo replied with as much enthusiasm as he could muster. " With all of your help, finding my phone should be a sinch! Thank you again, Panda, for helping me." Panda merely shrugged and ran towards his brothers.

Smirking once again, Theo silently added, " Because of you, I'll finally get what I want." Evil thoughts flew through Theo's mind as he ran a little to catch up to the Bears. Thoughts that only the craziest of people would think. But, Theo never thought that his mind was crazy. As he played through his sick imaginings once again, all Theo thought was, " \_What a beautiful day in the woods\_."

\* \* \*

><p>" <em>Okay, did this guy just run around the forest blindly until he found our cave. Where the heck is his phone<em>," Panda thought as he looked under another bush. A half an hour passed already, but no one could find Theo's phone. " Come on man! Do you have even the slightest idea where your phone is!" Grizz complained tiredly. " Yeah, my feet are hurting, and I checked my weather app. It's about to rain soon," Panda whined, pointing at the dark storm clouds forming above their heads. " Ice bear is getting frustrated," Ice bear said monotonously.

" Wait! Now I remember where it is!" Theo exclaimed. The Bears sighed in relief. Theo then broke the mood by pointing deeper into the forest. " I remember walking through this part of the forest before I dropped my phone! It must be in there. Come on guys! I'm sure that in a few minutes, we will find my phone!" The Bears looked past Theo to stare at the hoard of trees behind him. The area was dark and gloomy. There were spider webs everywhere, and it seemed that every tree was bare.

Grizz sighed sadly and began walking towards the trees before a white paw stopped him. " Ice bear believes that we shouldn't go in there." " It's not like we have a choice, little bro. Look, the sooner we find Theo's phone, the sooner we can go back home." Before Grizz could continue, he was once again stopped by Ice. " Ice bear \_strongly\_ believes that we shouldn't go in there." " If you want to stay here, that's fine, but I'm going in," Grizz said, crossing his arms stubbornly.

Ice turned towards Panda. " It's better if we just hurry this up," Panda said. As the two brothers started walking towards the forest, Ice stayed behind, occasionally looking south, the direction their cave was in. Sighing, Ice started walking into the woods along with

his brothers, the terrible feeling in his gut getting stronger with every step deeper into the intimidating forest.

The brothers, feeling extremely nervous, started to huddle together as they followed Theo, shivering slightly at all of the misshapen trees and dead plants. The air around them was thick and musty, the tension didn't help at all either. After a few more minutes of walking, Panda finally spotted something. " Hey Theo? I think I found your phone," Panda said while pointing to a rectangular object on the ground. Theo walked over to the phone and picked it up gently. He inspected it to see if it was broken. Apparently it wasn't, since Theo then gave the Bears a huge smile.

" I thank you for your assistance, Bears." The Bears sighed in relief, glad that the search was finally over. They turned around and started to walk back home... until a voice stopped them. " But, there's more thing I would like for you to do," Theo said. All the Bears froze at Theo's tone. It was quiet and gentle, but there was a sharp edge to it. A sinister edge to it. The Bears turned around to face Theo. He had one of his hands behind his back while the other one held his phone gently.

Grizz sighed in irritation, clearly annoyed with Theo's antics. " Theo, we are very busy today. Now, if you'll just-" Suddenly, Theo's expression melted into a deranged smirk as he squeezed the phone in his hand, breaking it into little pieces. Nobody said anything due to shock.

The only sound that was made would be the rustling of the trees and the thundering of a storm coming. A single drop of rain fell from the clouds. It made a small splashing sound. The sound was barely audible, but it awoke the Bears from their confusion nonetheless.

" What the heck, dude! It took us a half an hour to find that!" Grizz yelled angrily. Theo shrugged and dropped the phone pieces on the ground while smashing them even more with his boot. " I didn't need it anymore," Theo said as he stalked towards the Bears menacingly. He pointed to Ice bear, smirking. " He's the one I want. The one I spied on for days. The one I'm going to take home with me today."

Though they were still shocked, confused, and scared, both Panda and Grizz managed to glare venomously at Theo. He was not getting their little brother. Grizz and Panda stood in front of Ice bear protectively. " You can't have him you crazy loon!" Panda exclaimed. " You're not getting anywhere near him," Grizz growled. " Ice bear should have brought his ax," Ice stated as he positioned his body into a more defensive stance.

Theo's smirk widened and he shook his finger at the Bears, as if he was talking to mere children. " I don't think you clearly understand your predicament. I have no doubt in my mind that you will see reason and let me take Ice bear or, if things go really well, Ice bear himself will come with me willingly." " We will never hand our little brother to you!" Panda yelled. By now, the storm has gotten worse. The wind has picked up speed, the sky darkened threateningly, and more water droplets fell down the sky in a rapid pace.

" Think about your current situation," Theo said. " You're in an unknown territory, you have no where to run, and one of will die if you don't do as I say." " Is that a threat," Grizz said. " No, in

fact, the effects should be kicking in about...

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2-" Suddenly, Panda started coughing. His condition grew more poor with every second. The brothers stared at Panda in worry as his coughing continued to worsen. " Well, that was faster than expected," Theo said in amusement. Panda fell on his knees and onto the ground, gasping for breath. " Panda!" Grizz exclaimed as Ice caught Panda from falling face down on the dead grass. Panda continued to wheeze violently, his throat and cheeks swelling up, making it nearly impossible for him to breathe, let alone talk.

" Swelling is a normal symptom for an allergic reaction. Since Panda is allergic to nuts, I thought it would be interesting to see what his affects are." " But why did the reaction start to kick in now! It should have been as soon as his tongue even touched a nut." "Well, what if I told you that what I gave him wasn't a nut. What I made for him was a concoction of my own. It has the same chemical structure of a nut, but it's still different. I experimented on many people with a similar nut allergy that Panda has. I timed their reaction to see when it will kick in. I was pleased to see that a half an hour was the maximum time limit, give or take depending on the person. Sadly, none of the people I used survived long enough to see my success." Grizz stared at Theo, horrified. " Y-you killed all those people just to get to my little brother." Theo's smirk simply widened.

Grizz's eyes widened in fright as he turned towards Ice urgently. " Bro, get Panda's medicine, quickly!" Ice nodded and shakily took out Panda's medicine. He was about to inject some into his system, before he was once again stopped by Theo. " I admire that you're still trying to save your brother, Icy, but like I said, what I gave him wasn't a nut. You need a different medicine in order for the swelling to go down. Luckily for you three," Theo then took out a needle. It was filled with a light blue liquid. It must be the antidote! " I have the correct medicine right here."

Grizz turned towards Ice bear, signaling him to stand near Panda. Ice nodded and tried to preform some breathing treatments for Panda. Grizz turned towards Theo and asked, " What are you Theo?" " What do you think I am?" " A monster." Theo laughed. As he laughed, Theo's form began to change. It changed into something taller, bigger, and scarier. Grizz gasped, Panda nearly screamed, and Ice's eyes widened.

Theo, if that's even his real name, turned into a giant snake. He still had the antidote safely tucked in a skin pocket. The snake resembled a cobra some what, but it had a different color pattern on its back. The only thing that the cobra kept that Theo had would be his sapphire blue eyes, now slitted dangerously in malicious glee.

" If you're thinking about taking the antidote from me, you might have to change your plans," snake Theo hissed out. " Besides, do you really have time to fight me?" The snake gestured towards Panda. Panda was in critical condition. His breathing was slowing down and his swelling still hasn't let up. If they didn't get the medicine

soon... " \_No! I can't let that happen! But I can't let this monster get Ice bear either. What do I do!? This is so messed up\_, " Grizz thought frantically. He couldn't choose between his brothers, he couldn't.

" Judging by how he's breathing, and the bad weather conditions, I'd give Panda about three minutes of life before he suffocates. I don't know about you, but for me that's a long time. Let's speed things up shall we?" snake Theo said. Taking the medicine with his tail from his skin pocket, Theo held it up over his head. Grizz looked up at Theo desperately, already having an idea on what he will do.

" If you don't make a decision soon, Grizz, I'll smash this bottle to pieces, along with your hope of saving Panda's life." " Why are you doing this to us! We never did anything to you before!" Grizz yelled. Theo smiled down at Grizz and explained his reasons calmly. " It's simple, I want something, and this is the only way to get it. You're the one that is being stubborn." " Why do you want Ice bear? Why don't you take me instead?" Grizz asked pleadingly.

" I don't want you. I planned all of this to get Icy and that's all." Taking a more serious edge, Theo said, " Your choices are simple, Grizz. One, let your brother die and I get Ice anyway, since I'm stronger than the both of you or two, you willingly let me get Ice and your brother lives. I won't kill Ice if that's what you're worried about. I wouldn't have planned this much just to kill him." "\_Then what do you want with him\_, " Grizz thought sadly. " If you can get him by force, then why do all this?" " I like to see my prey squirm a little."

Suddenly, Theo slid up to meet Grizz's terrified stare. They were only inches apart. " What will it be, Grizz? It's your choice," were the only words that crawled out of Theo's mouth as he stared at Grizz, waiting for an answer.

What will he choose? A good question indeed. Yet, the better question is: Will someone choose for him? All good things are given through time. Sadly, Grizz didn't have time. Ice bear knew that all too well.

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file.